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למאידה תלת מ"אח ויקול, i. e. "he then moves the dish three times and says."

Ibid., l. 21. Read *אלחאני* *אלחאני*, i. e. "then the second cup is brought."

P. 102, l. 12. For Mecca read Medina.

W. BACHER.

THE FIRST APPROBATION OF HEBREW BOOKS.

JOSEF PERLES¹ was the first to draw attention to the fact that Elia Levita's *Bachur*, the first edition of which appeared at Rome in 1518, contained the first approbation to be found in Jewish books. It was on Friday, September 10, 1518, that the Beth-Din in Rome, consisting of Israel b. Jechiel Ashkenazi, Sabbatai b. Mordechai, and Joseph b. Abraham, surnamed Hagri², a native of Hungary, issued an approbation of Elia Levita's two books, *Harkaba* and *Bachur*.

It commences with an appreciation of the value of these books, dwells on the expenditure incurred in the printing, and then threatens with excommunication any one who would dare to reprint them within the next ten years. This is the main object of the document. The author, as well as the publishers—the brothers Isaac, Jomtob and Jacob, sons of Avigdor Levi, according to Elia Levita's concluding poem to *Harkaba*³, Romans by all the three—should be protected against damage by this document of the Rabbis.

¹ *Beiträge zur Geschichte der hebr. und aram. Sprache*, p. 202, note 1.

² Ibid., p. 200 sqq. Berliner, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, II, 1, p. 86. In my MS. of the Register of the ח"ק of Mantua, fol. 32a, there appears, 1578, a donation from יוסף בנו מר' יצחק אונגרו, who was perhaps a grandson and namesake of Joseph Hagri. In the same year he lost his wife, ברינה אשה ר' אונגרו. Rieger, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, pp. 93, 113, says that Joseph Hagri was a native of Barbary.

³ ליצחק ויחשוב ויעקב ליים אביהם אביגדור ואמם ירשה. This seems to be an allusion, after Num. xxiv. 18, that their native town was Edom = Rome. A woman's name cannot possibly be meant here; in the first place, Elia Levita would not have given their mother's name, because it was not customary to do so in the case of living persons, and secondly, because no such name exists.—There exists only a woman's name: ירשה but not ירשה, see T. Tschorn's *המסע*, ס', pp. 261, 310.—In the copy of the poem as given by Rieger, l. c., Appendix 10, וסמך צרחיו should, of course, be צרחיו. Although Avigdor hailed from Padua, his sons could be called Romans all the same, from the town where they resided.

But besides this more commercial origin of the approbations, Perles¹ also pointed out the other class of approbations which had its origin in the censorship. Already at the assembly of Rabbis at Ferrara on June 21, 1554, it was resolved that no new book was to be printed without the express consent of three Rabbis and the Council of the Congregation. In the same way, several governments—e.g. in the case of books printed in Prague—decreed that the Rabbinate of the country should be responsible, through its approbation, for every Hebrew book published.

DAVID KAUFMANN.

¹ l. c., p. 221, note 1.